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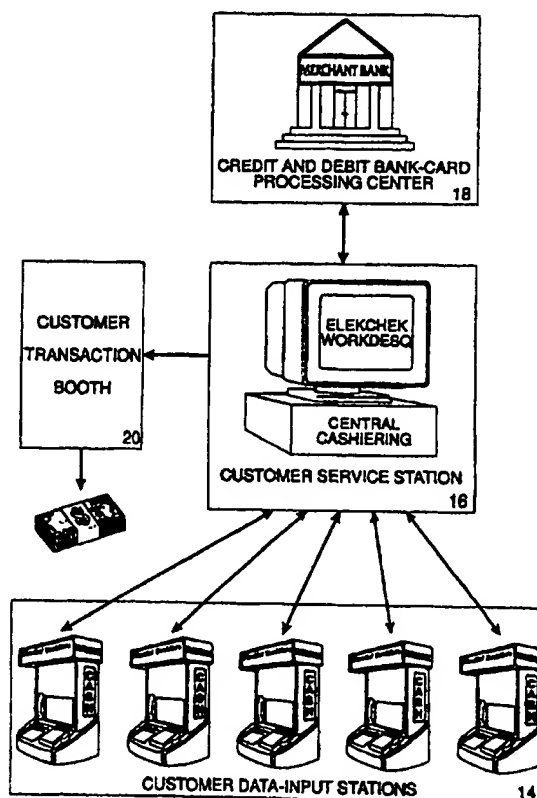
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(54) Title: DISTRIBUTED ON-LINE MONEY ACCESS CARD TRANSACTION PROCESSING SYSTEM

(57) Abstract

A distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system (10) that functions with a credit card and debit bank card processing center (18). The system (10) includes a customer data-input station (14), a customer service station (16) and a customer transaction booth (20). The system operates with an on-line transaction processing software (30) and two secondary software programs (32, 34). A system transaction begins when a customer passes a card through a magnetic card reader (14B) located in the customer data-input station (14). The customer enters the transaction on a touchscreen unit (14C) and the transaction is sent to the customer service station (16), where the transaction is processed and sent to the credit and debit bank card processing center (18) for approval or disapproval. If approved, a check is printed on a printer (16C) located in the customer service station (16). The customer then goes to a customer transaction booth (20) where the check is converted to a cash payment.



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DISTRIBUTED ON-LINE MONEY ACCESS CARD
TRANSACTION PROCESSING SYSTEM

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 The invention pertains to the general field of credit card cash advance systems and more particularly to an improved and simplified client-operated system that interfaces with any existing bank card authorization system.

BACKGROUND ART

10 Computer system client-operated financial transactions fall into two primary categories: 1) cash withdrawals, such as those from an Automated Teller Machine (ATM), and 2) credit card cash advances (CCCA). In the first scenario, cash withdrawals are the method
15 for obtaining money, and this transaction is debited against the customer's bank account. If enough money is available in the customer's account the transaction will be approved, otherwise, the transaction is rejected. Industry statistics indicate that most
20 customers have a limited amount of money on hand in their account, and ATM's will only allow the withdrawal of a certain money limit each day. Additionally, ATM's require sizeable space for operation, restrictions exist on the credit and debit cards used for operation,
25 the operation and maintenance of ATM's are expensive, including "cash restocking" regularly, and ATM's do not provide any management information with regard to direct marketing and other promotional activities.

30 Credit card cash advance (CCCA) operations, however, allow the customer to advance, as opposed to

withdraw, cash against their available line of credit on their credit card. The number of transactions per day are not limited and the money received is strictly dependent on the customers available line of credit and the allowable limit by the location. CCCA primarily use preprinted checks, as opposed to a receipt, printed with the customer's credit card number, and signed by the customer as receipt for the money received.

Both of the above described financial transaction system are typically comprised of centralized computer systems in one location that control all the available locations. In other words, when the central computer system is inoperative, it affects all remote locations. This centralized computer approach is not uncommon for transaction oriented services; however, its undesirable limitations are solved by the instant invention. The Credit Card Cash Advance (CCCA) market is not widely understood by either the consumers who use credit cards for cash advances or the establishments which support these transactions for their customers. Currently there are two primary markets for CCCA 1) the gambling and leisure industry, and 2) the "over-the-counter" public money. Additional markets that could be expanded include: hotels, government agencies, airports, universities, and any other high-traffic public locations where people may need immediate cash. Market research indicates that this expanded market could sustain \$100 million a year in fee revenue while the two primary market areas in the United States currently sustain over \$200 million a year in fee revenue.

In the United States, the CCCA market place is extremely limited and is primarily controlled by two companies. The first and major company operates a computerized check cashing system that includes check authorization resources and telecommunication billing

sources; the second company is primarily concerned with controlling the disbursing of "over-the-counter" public money through electronic funds transfer.

5 The major company services the gaming and
leisure industry where the principal form of money
exchange is cash. Therefore, the cash advance system
must be quick, convenient and accurate. The current
cash advance systems used by the "casinos" appear to be
10 operated and controlled by more than one computer
system. However, in reality, all systems are owned by
the same company and use the same computer system.
Therefore, when one customer location becomes
inoperative so do all other customer locations. This
centralized computer approach is not uncommon for
15 transactions oriented services and its undesirable
limitations is one of the problems together with
logistics problems that are solved by the instant
invention.

20 The ATM has made it easier for banks and
financial institutions to satisfy their customer's
needs for fast and convenient withdrawals. The ATM
service provider receives a percentage of the
transaction fee that is charged by the ATM device. When
25 comparing the utility of ATM's versus CCCA, it is well
to remember that ATM's facilitate a withdrawal
transaction and not a cash advance. Therefore, the
number of transactions are limited as well as the
amount of money received which in turns, limits the
benefits received by the customer.

30 A search of the prior art did not disclose any
patents or literature that read directly on the claims
of the instant invention. However, U.S. patent number
5,175,682 issued to Higashiyama, et al on 29 December
1992 is considered related. This patent discloses a
35 method and structure for processing and clearing checks
in a timely manner. A check recipient utilizes

hardware and software to gather data from a check and then process the check. The hardware includes a reader for reading the Magnetic Ink Character Recognition (MICR) printed on the check, and means for associating this data with information pertaining to the transaction. This information is combined in a data record which is stored for future batch data transmission to a clearing house or the issuing bank. The invention also provide means for determining if the check information of a particular check is to be communicated in real time or in the batch mode.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

The distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system is designed to provide a multi-tasking stand-alone financial transaction processing system. The system consists of a customer data-input station that is in the form of a kiosk, a customer service station, a credit and debit bank card processing center, a customer transaction booth and a distributed on-line money access card transaction processing software which operates the system.

The customer data input station includes a bank card reader that reads various credit and debit bank cards, a touchscreen unit that allows a customer to enter transaction requests and receive instructions relating to that request, and a printer that prints customers transaction receipts. This station is connected to the customer service station which includes at least one workstation computer that processes the customer transaction data and a laser printer that prints the customer checks corresponding to an approved request. The transaction request processed by the customer service station is sent via a modem to the credit and debit bankcard processing

center.

The processing center will either approve or disapprove the customer's transaction request. If a transaction is disapproved, the reasons for the disapproval are displayed in the bank card reader and/or touchscreen unit located in the customer's data input station. Conversely, if the transaction is approved, the approval message is displayed in both or either of the customer's data input station, and a check corresponding to the transaction amount is printed on the laser printer located in the customer service center. The customer then walks over to the customer transaction booth where the check is converted for a cash payment.

In view of the above disclosure it is the primary object of the invention to provide a distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system that is accurate, convenient and customer friendly.

In addition to the primary object it is also an object of the invention to produce an invention that:

- o is reliable and easily maintained,
- o can be located in various high pedestrian traffic locations,
- o can be easily exported to provide additional financial services,
- o is cost effective from both a manufacturer, and consumer points of view,
- o provides lower customer transaction fees with direct marketing and promotional activities for customer loyalty.

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the subsequent detailed description of the preferred embodiment and the appended claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIGURE 1 is an overall block diagram of the distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system.

5 FIGURE 2 is a block diagram of the system showing the interface between a customer data input service station which includes a customer data input station and a customer service station, a credit and debit bank card processing center, and a customer transaction booth.

10 FIGURE 3 is a block/functional diagram showing the operation of an IPC transport mechanism with eight software modules.

15 FIGURE 4 is a block diagram showing the divisional categories of the IPC transport mechanism.

 FIGURE 5 is a block diagram of the task manager showing multi-threaded task sequences that operates a plurality of tasks.

20 FIGURES 6-22 are flow diagrams of the system software program.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

The best mode for carrying out the invention is presented in terms of a preferred embodiment that allows the timely processing of consumer credit cards and debit bank cards. The preferred embodiment as shown in FIGURES 1-22 is comprised of a distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system 10 that consists of a customer data-input/service station 12 that is further comprised of at least one customer data-input station 14 and a customer service station 16; a credit and debit bank card processing center 18; and a customer transaction booth 20. The above hardware elements operate with a primary distributed on-line money access card transaction processing software 30 and two secondary programs entitled a point of sale software program 32 and a distributed on-line money access card transaction software program 34.

The overall distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system 10 is shown in FIGURE 1. The figure depicts broadly the interface of the customer data-input service station 12, which includes the customer data-input station 14 and the customer service station 16, with the customer transaction booth 20 and the credit and debit bank card processing center 18. As shown in FIGURE 2, the customer data input station 14 interfaces and communicates with the customer service station 16 by means of a serial RS232 port 22. The interface and communication between the customer service station 16 and the credit and debit bank card processing center 18 is by means of a conventional modem 24.

The customer data-input station 14, is preferably configured in the form of a kiosk 14A. The system 10 utilizes several kiosk's as shown in FIGURE 1, that are located in an easily accessible location

such as in shopping malls, airports and other high-traffic public locations. The kiosks high-tech units are designed and embellished to differ from other non-related kiosk's that may be located in the same area and are further designed to fit and compliment the surroundings of the location environment.

The customer data-input station 14 consists of a means for accepting and reading a variety of customer credit cards i.e., Visa SM, Mastercard SM, Discover SM, American Express SM and debit bank cards i.e., ATM cards. The means preferably consists of a bank card reader 14B also known as a magnetic card strip reader. The station includes a touchscreen unit 14C or a keypad 14D that functions in combination with an alpha-numeric display 14E. These units function to receive and display the customer's transaction request, to query the customer and to encrypt the customer transaction data. The station 14 also includes a printer 14F that provides the customer with a receipt listing the transaction data.

All the functions of the customer data-input station 14 are operated by the local point of sale (POS) software program 32 that is located in the station 14. The means for interfacing and communicating with the customer service station 16 is by a cable connected to serial RS232 port located in both the station 14 and 16 as shown best in FIGURE 2.

The customer service station 16 as shown in FIGURE 2, includes at least one workstation computer 16A. This computer, which is operated by the distributed on-line money access card transaction software program 34, has means for receiving and processing the customer data received from the customer data input station 14. The customer processed data is applied via the modem 24 to the credit and debit bank card processing center 18. If the transaction is not

approved by the center 18, the reasons for the disapproval are presented to the customer on the touchscreen unit 14C or the alpha-numeric display 14E.

5 If an approval is received from the center 18, a printer 16C connected to the workstation computer 16A is activated. The printer has means for electronically printing, on demand, a customer's check that corresponds to the accepted customer transaction. The printer 16C is preferably a laser printer that prints
10 the checks from electronic images stored in the laser printer using blank check stockpaper and Magnetic Ink Character Recognition (MICR) toner. The received check is given to the customer at a conveniently located customer transaction booth 20 where the customer's
15 check is converted to cash or some other method of payment. Before the cash is received, the customer must present a proper identification and sign the check.

20 In summary, the distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system 10 is designed to provide an improved credit bank card and debit bank card system. To utilize the system, the following simple steps are taken:

- 25 a) The customer walks up to a customer data-input station 14 which preferably is in the form of an attractive and functional kiosk. Within the kiosk, is located a card reader 14B and a touchscreen unit 14C or a keypad 14D with an alpha-numeric display
30 14E.
- b) Customer passes a credit card or bank debit card across the card reader 14B to initiate a transaction,
- 35 c) customer selects the amount of the transaction by touching appropriate sections of the touchscreen unit 14C or the keys on

the keypad 14D.

- 5 d) customer views touchscreen to determine if
the transaction has been approved or
rejected. If a rejection is received, the
reason for the rejection is displaced on the
touchscreen 14C or alpha-numeric display
14E. If an approval is received, the
message is displaced and a check is
electronically printed with the approved
10 transaction amount on a laser printer 16C
located in the customer service station 16.
- e) customer then proceeds to the customer
transaction booth 20. Where when proper
identification is presented, the customer
15 receives a cash payment or the like.

The system 10 is operated by a distributed
on-line money access card transaction processing
software 30 that consists of an inter-process
communication (IPC) transport mechanism that operates
20 eight modules as shown in FIGURE 3.

IPC TRANSPORT MECHANISM

The IPC transport mechanism 30A functions as the
"logical data bus" for the inter-process communications
between distributed system processes across various
25 physical or logical data links. This software design
enables dependent processes to communicate regardless
of whether the processes reside on the same platform.
Thus, processes are allowed to be distributed across
one or many operating platforms using various
30 communication topologies, allowing scaling of the
application or taking advantage of the inherent
properties of a platform best suited to a particular
process. The IPC transport mechanism 30A is divided
into the following categories as shown in FIGURE 4.

IPC Administrator API - This is the interface seen by each process in the system. When Process A establishes a session with Process B, the interface seen by the processes is the same regardless of whether
5 the processes are executing on the same platform, and regardless of the physical link and protocol used to link the multiple platforms in a distributed setting.

Transport Interface - The transport interface manages connections between processes and provides a
10 mechanism for querying process status and availability. This interface makes the distinction between local and remote processes and assigns to a connection the appropriate protocol and device interface.

Protocol Converter - the protocol converter
15 frames data packets as required by the protocol assigned by the transport interface for transmission across the communications device linking the processes. Packets are framed by adding the necessary header, trailer, routing and error detection/correction
20 information. This interface also manages any receipt verification, acknowledgment, and retransmission as required by the protocol. If a data packet is destined for a local process, no framing is necessary and the packet is sent immediately to the process or posted to
25 the input queue designated for the receipt of interprocess data packets.

Device Interface - The device interface performs any initialization necessary for a physical device and handles the low-level transmission and reception of
30 data to and from the device.

Device - The physical communications device.

KERNEL MODULE

The Kernel module 30B consists of the Task Manager and other low-level functions required on each
35 platform running the system 10 modules. The Kernel

consists of the categories described below.

Task Manager - The Task Manager as shown in FIGURE 3 uses multi-threaded non-preemptive multi-tasking technology to provide a multi-processing environment to the system 10 modules regardless of whether the host environment or operating system are capable of providing such services. Tasks use state-sequencing logic to perform small parts of an operation with each thread invocation.

Queue Manager - The Queue Manager provides functions to the system modules for creating, deleting and managing queues and queue entire (jobs). Processes that must process requests in a serial manner use the queue manager for storing pending requests and service requests from the queue in the order received.

Exception Handler - When processes generate an exception (error), a signal is sent to the exception handler. Other processes may establish exception hooks to allow them to perform the processing for designated exceptions. If an exception of a critical nature requires system shutdown, the exception handler will notify running tasks to perform the shutdown in an orderly manner.

Low-Level System Resources - Provides an interface to various system-dependent resources such as memory management, file access, and display mapping.

USER INTERFACE

The User Interface module 30C present to an operator various options for performing tasks which are carried out by other system modules. These options are presented in the form of menus, message displays and data entry screens. The user interface module translates the user options and coordinates invocation of other system processes to perform the selected task.

SECURITY

The security module 30D protects the system 10 from unauthorized access, tampering and fraudulent activities by performing the functions described below.

Password Protection - Each system operator requires a password to access the system, and the administrator of the system determines what functions may be performed by each operator.

Data Encryption - Provides a proprietary encryption mechanism for protecting sensitive data stored in files or transmitted between processes.

Hot-Card File - The system maintains a local database of credit or debit cards that are stolen or otherwise thought to be involved in fraudulent activities. This allows such transactions to be stopped immediately without exposing the system operator to fraud liabilities.

Current Transaction Reporting - To comply with federal and state money-laundering protection laws, the system tracks multiple transactions performed by an individual and automatically generates the necessary regulatory reports required when the cumulative amount of transactions during the specified period meets or exceeds the amount specified by the regulation.

POS MANAGER

The POS manager module 30E processes transaction requests and coordinates the authorization and printing of the electronic checks or other transaction-generated documents. Several authorization sources may be available to the POS manager depending on the type of transaction and the current transaction volume. The POS manager will select the appropriate authorizer and pass the transaction data to the Transaction Authorization and Settlement Module for transmission to the authorizer.

the authorizer.

TRANSACTION AUTHORIZATION AND SETTLEMENT MODULE

The Transaction Authorization and Settlement (TAS) Module 30F manages connections with the authorization network(s). At the time an authorization request is received, the TAS module will select a communications device for communicating with the authorizer. The TAS module will first try to utilize an existing connection if one is already in place. If one is not in place, an alternate device may be utilized to establish the connection, or if none is available, the request will be queued until a device becomes available. In the event of a failure to establish communications with the authorizer or a failure of an established link, the TAS module will activate alternate routing logic to establish or re-establish communications.

PRINT MANAGER

The Print Manager module 30G processes requests from other system modules for printing electronic checks and reports. These print requests are queued for printing as soon as the designated printer is available, or the Print Manager may be selected to print the report on the first available printer or to distribute the report to multiple designated printers. The Print Manager tracks the inventory levels of checks, toner and other printer related consummables. Functions are also provided for querying the status of print jobs, deleting print jobs, suspending print jobs and querying printer availability and status.

DATABASE ENGINE

The Database Engine module 30H provides a mechanism for storing transaction data and other data required through the system. The database is designed around the relation model and processes commands in a transaction oriented manner. Facilities are included to ensure data integrity, including file and record

locks, integrity verification and automatic index regeneration.

5 The Database Engine also provides file-level management, the Shared File System. This system makes data files available to all system modules regardless of location and manages and synchronizes access to these files. Any platform running system modules may have a file area designated as a shared file area and will be managed by the shared file system.

DEVICES COMMUNICATION MODULE

10 The devices communication module 30I allows a variety of communicating devices to be operated by the IPC transport mechanism without needing to be aware of the specific protocols required by the devices. The major devices supported by the system are as follows.

15 Intelligent Workstation Adapter - The intelligent workstation adapter (IWA) is comprised of hardware and software which enables many transaction terminals to be connected through serial RS-232 interfaces to a system running on a personal computer which is normally limited to only four serial interface ports. An IWA provides 16 ports, and two IWA's may be connected to provide up to 32 ports.

20 Point of Sale (POS) Terminals - POS terminals are utilized by system customers to process transactions. These terminals contain a dual-track magnetic card reader for acquiring cardholder account information, a keypad for selecting options, entering transaction amounts, a display to report the progress of the transaction and request input and a receipt printer. Transaction requests are forwarded through the IPC to the POS Manager, and the result of the transaction is relayed back to the terminal which then instructs the customer of the completed transaction.

25

30

ViewChek Touch Screen Terminal - ViewChek terminals present to the customer the same options as the POS terminals but include a color flat-screen graphics display to communicate transaction progress and request customer input. The graphics display includes a touch-sensitive surface which allows a customer to select options by pointing to them on the display. In addition, the screen may be programmed to display advertising messages while the system is idle or processing.

Slave Terminals - Slave terminals provide a simple, inexpensive interface to the system for use in places where it is not practical to place an entire computer system. These terminals are connected through the IPC transport mechanism and may be programmed to perform any function available on the system. In addition, reports and electronic checks may be directed to printers attached to slave terminals.

Credit Card and Drivers License Readers - these devices are equipped with a device that is capable of reading the magnetic stripe on bank cards (debit and credit), as well as the driver's licenses being introduced in many states with magnetic encoding. This automates data recording and prevents data entry errors.

MICR Readers and Bar Code Scanners - All electronic checks printed by the system include account information (known as MICR encoding) required by the Federal Reserve for clearing. The system is equipped with a MICR reader capable of reading this information and transmitting it a system module for processing. This allows instant retrieval of transaction information and also verification of the transaction. Many documents generated by the system also contain identifying information encoded in a bar code. A bar code scanner connected to a system allows all

transactions associated with a document to instantly be retrieved for viewing or processing.

Modems - Modems are used by the system for authorizing and settling transactions.

5 LAN/WAN Interface - The systems may be interconnected with other systems or networks to give other applications access to the system data and to allow interoperability with other systems.

10 The computer software flow diagrams for the system 10 are shown in FIGURES 7-22.

15 While the invention has been described in complete detail and pictorially shown in the accompanying drawings it is not to be limited to such details, since many changes and modifications may be made to the invention without departing from the spirit and the scope thereof. Hence, it is described to cover any and all modifications and forms which may come within the language and scope of the claims.

CLAIMS

1. A distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system comprising:

A. a customer data-input/service station comprising:

a) at least one customer data-input station comprising:

(1) means for accepting and reading a variety of customer credit and debit bank cards,

(2) means for querying, answering and encrypting customer transaction data,

(3) a local point of sale (POS) software program that operates the functions of said customer data-input station,

(4) means for printing customer transaction receipts, and

(5) means for interfacing and communicating with a customer service station,

b) the customer service station comprising:

(1) at least one workstation computer having means for receiving and processing the customer transaction data received from said customer data-input station,

(2) a local transaction software program that operates the functions of said customer service station,

- 5 (3) a printer connected to said workstation computer and having means for electronically printing on-demand, a customer's check corresponding to the accepted customer transaction,
- (4) means for interfacing with a credit and debit bank card processing center,
- 10 B. a credit and debit bank card processing center that receives a transaction from said customer service station and either accepts or rejects the transaction,
- 15 C. a customer transaction booth where, if a customer transaction is approved by said credit and debit bank card processing center, the customer's check is converted to cash upon presentation of customer's identification, and
- 20 D. a distributed on-line money access card transaction processing software that operates said system.
- 25 2. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said means for accepting and reading a customer's credit and debit card comprises a bank-card reader.
3. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said means for querying and answering a customer's transaction data comprises a touchscreen unit.
- 30 4. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said means for querying and answering a customer's transaction data comprises a keypad that functions in combination with an alpha-numeric display.

5. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said customer data-input station is configured in the form of a kiosk located in an easily accessible location.

5 6. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said means for said customer data-input station to interface and communicate with said customer service station comprises an RS232 port.

10 7. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said means for said customer service station to interface and communicate with said credit and debit bank card processing center comprises a modem.

15 8. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said printer is a laser printer that prints checks from electronic images stored in a laser printer using blank check stock paper, and MICR toner.

20 9. A method for implementing a distributed on-line money access card transaction processing system that provides an improved credit card and debit bank card system, said method comprising the following steps:

- 25 a) providing a data-input station that includes a card reader and touchscreen unit or a keypad with an alpha-numeric display,
- b) passing a credit card or bank debit card across said card reader to initiate a transaction,
- 30 c) selecting the amount of the transaction, and the method of payment by touching appropriate sections of said touchscreen or the keys on said keypad,

- 5 d) viewing touchscreen unit to determine if
the transaction has been approved or
rejected, if an approval or rejection is
received, the reason for the rejection is
displayed on said touchscreen, or
10 alpha-numeric display, if an approval is
received, a check is electronically
printed with the approved amount on a
printer located in a customer service
station, and
- 15 e) proceeding to a customer transaction
booth where the check is presented, with
proper identification, afterwhich
customer receives a cash payment.

10. The system as specified in claim 1 wherein said distributed on-line money access card transaction processing software comprises:

- 5 a) an inter-process communications (IPC) transport mechanism that functions as a logical data bus for said system which provides inter-process communications between distributed system processes across various physical or logical data links,
10
- b) a kernel module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for performing low-level functions required to operate said system, where said kernel module comprises:
15
 - (1) a task manager module having means for using multi-threaded, non-presumptive multi-tasking technology for providing a multi-processing environment to the system modules regardless of whether the host environment or operating system are capable of providing such services,
20
 - (2) a queue manager module having means for providing to the system modules function for creating, detecting and managing queries and queue entries,
25
 - (3) an exception handler module having means for receiving and processing an exception as error signal, and
30
 - (4) a low-level system resources module having means for providing an interface to various system-dependent resources such as memory management, file access and display mapping,
35

- 5 c) a user interface module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for presenting to an operator various options for performing tasks which are carried out by other system modules, where the user interface module translates the user options and coordinates invocation of other system processes to perform the selected task,
- 10 d) a security module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for protecting said system from unauthorized access, tampering and fraudulent activities where said security module comprises:
- 15 (1) a password protection circuit having means for requiring a password to be entered before access is permitted to said system,
- 20 (2) a data encryption circuit having an encryption mechanism for protecting sensitive data stored in files or transmitted between processes,
- 25 (3) a hot-card file having means for maintaining a local data base of credit or debit cards that are stolen or otherwise thought to be involved in fraudulent activities,
- 30 (4) a currency transaction reporting circuit having means for allowing the tracking of multiple transactions performed by an individual and thereafter, generating the necessary reports required when the cumulative amount of transactions, during a specified
- 35 period meets or exceeds the amount

specified by a regulation,

- 5 e) a POS monitor module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for processing transaction requests and for coordinating the authorization and printing of electronic checks or other transaction generated documents,
- 10 f) a transaction authorization and settlement (TAS) module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for connecting with the authorization network(s), where when an authorization is received, said TAS module selects a communication device for communicating with the authorizer,
- 15 g) a print manager module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for processing requests from other system modules, to print electronic checks and reports,
- 20 h) a data base engine module that interfaces with said IPC and having means for providing a mechanism for storing transaction data and other data required to operate said system and
- 25 i) a device communications module that interface with said IPC transport mechanism to allow said system to communicate without considering the specific protocols required by said devices.
- 30

11. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein said IPC transport mechanism is divided into the following functional categories:

- 5
- 10
- 15
- 20
- a) an IPC administrator that is the interface seen by each system process,
 - b) a transport interface having means for providing connections between processor and providing a mechanism for queuing process status and availability,
 - c) a protocol converter having means for framing data pockets as required by the protocol assigned by the transport interface for transmission across the communication device linking the processor,
 - d) a device interface having means for performing any initialization necessary for a physical device and for controlling the low-level transmission and reception data to and from the device and,
 - e) a physical communication device.

12. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein said exception handler module has means for nullifying running tasks to perform a system shut down where an exception of a critical nature is received.

25

13. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein said user interface options are presented in the form of menus, message displays and data entry screens.

30

14. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein said password protection circuit further comprises circuit means for allowing a system administrator to determine which functions may be performed by each operation.

15 15. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein
said print manager module further has circuit means for
allowing checks to be printed as soon as a designated
printer is available or when a first available printer
is available or to distribute the report to multiple
designated printers.

10 16. The system as specified in claim 15 wherein
said print manager module further has circuit means for
allowing the tracking of the inventory levels of checks
and other printer related consummables.

15 17. The system as specified in claim 15 wherein
said print manager module further comprise circuit
means for allowing the queuing of the status of print
jobs, deleting print jobs, suspending print jobs and
printing availability and status reports.

20 18. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein
said data base engine module further comprise circuit
means for ensuring data integrity which includes file
and record locks, integrity verification and automatic
index regulation.

19. The system as specified in claim 18 wherein
said data base engine module further comprises circuit
means for allowing data files to be available to all
system modules regardless of location.

25 20. The system as specified in claim 10 wherein
said IPC transport mechanism allows processor to be
distributed across at least one operating platform
using various communications topologies, thus allowing
scaling of the application or taking advantage of
30 inherent properties of a platform best suited to a
particular process.

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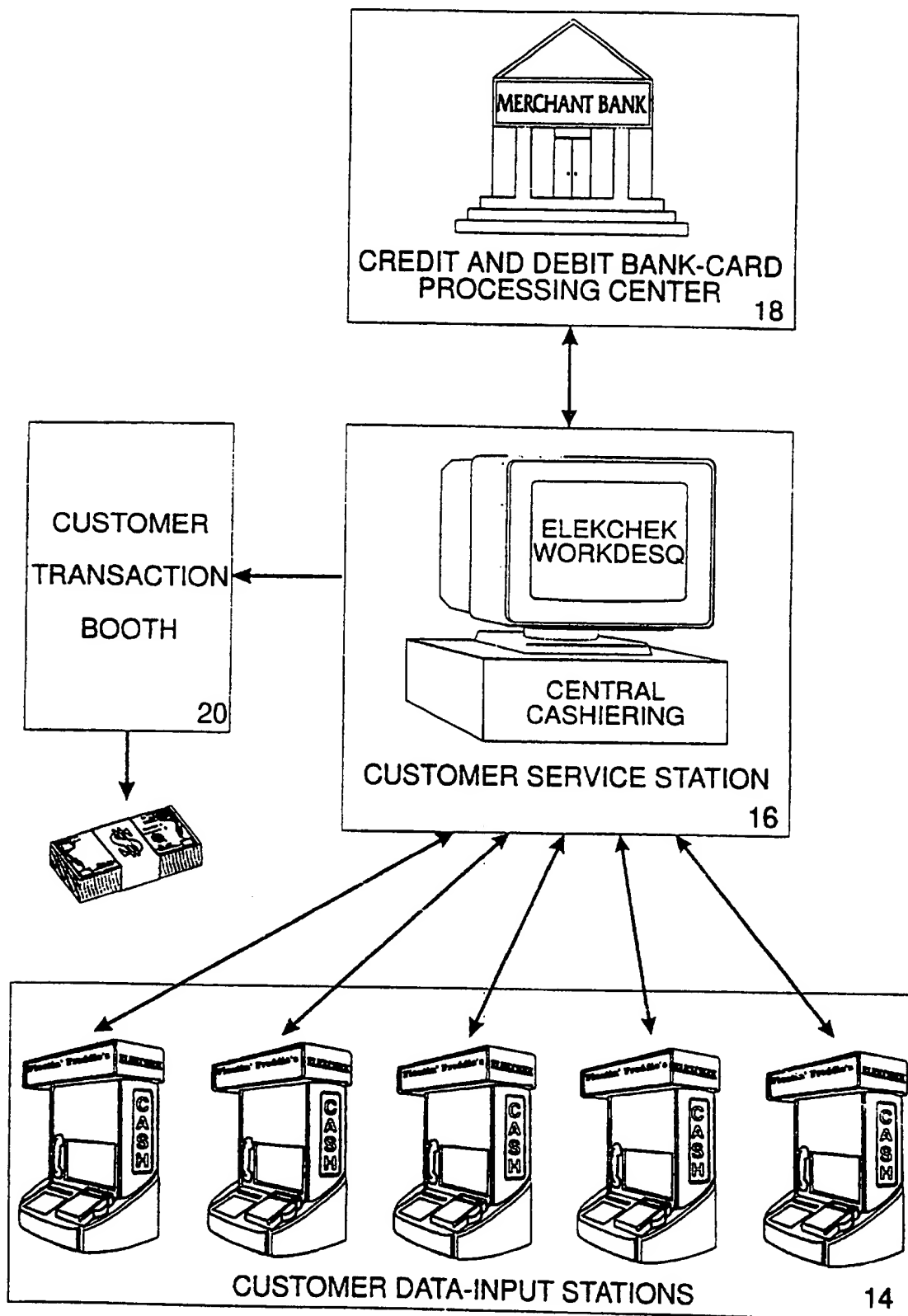


FIG. 1

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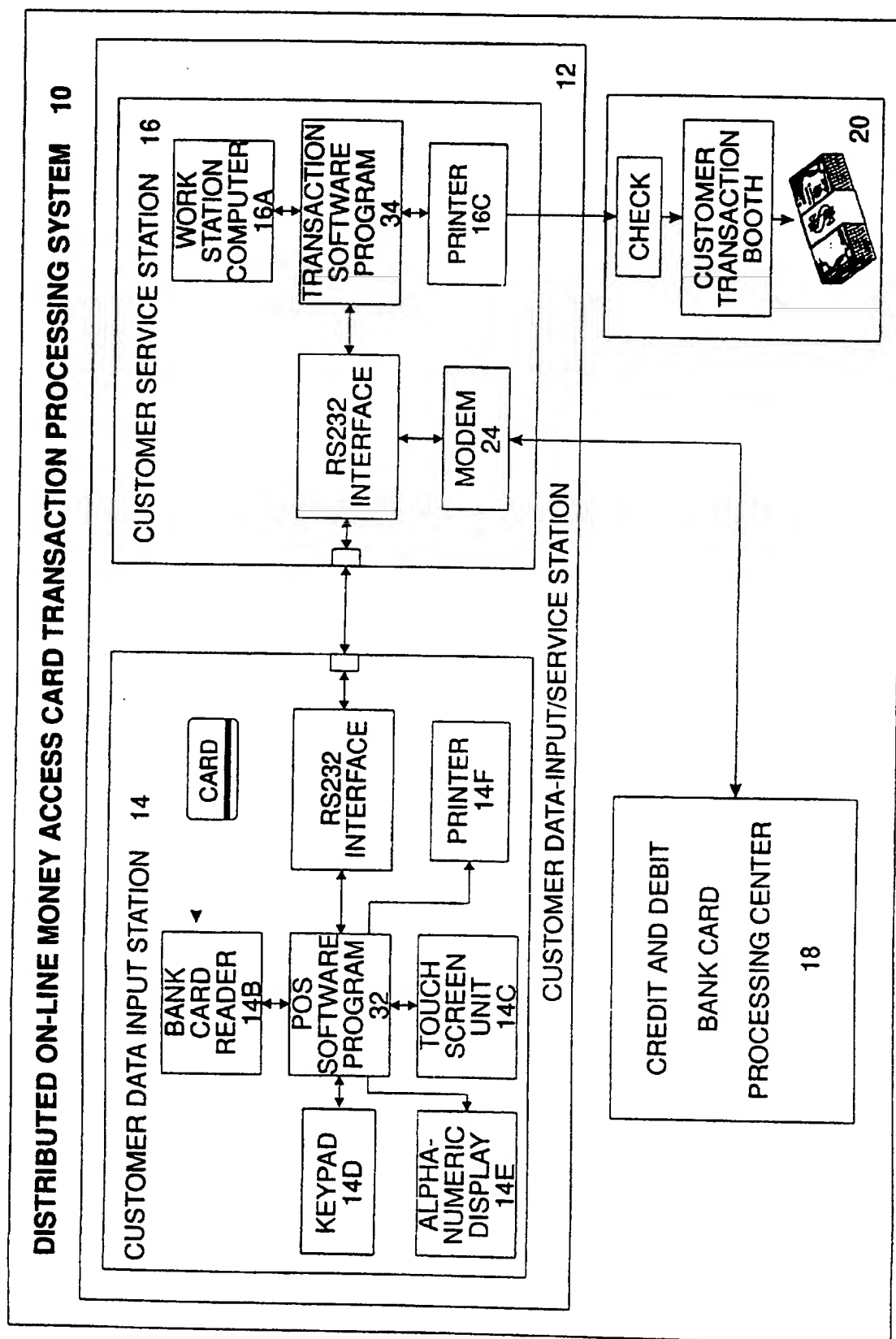


FIG. 2

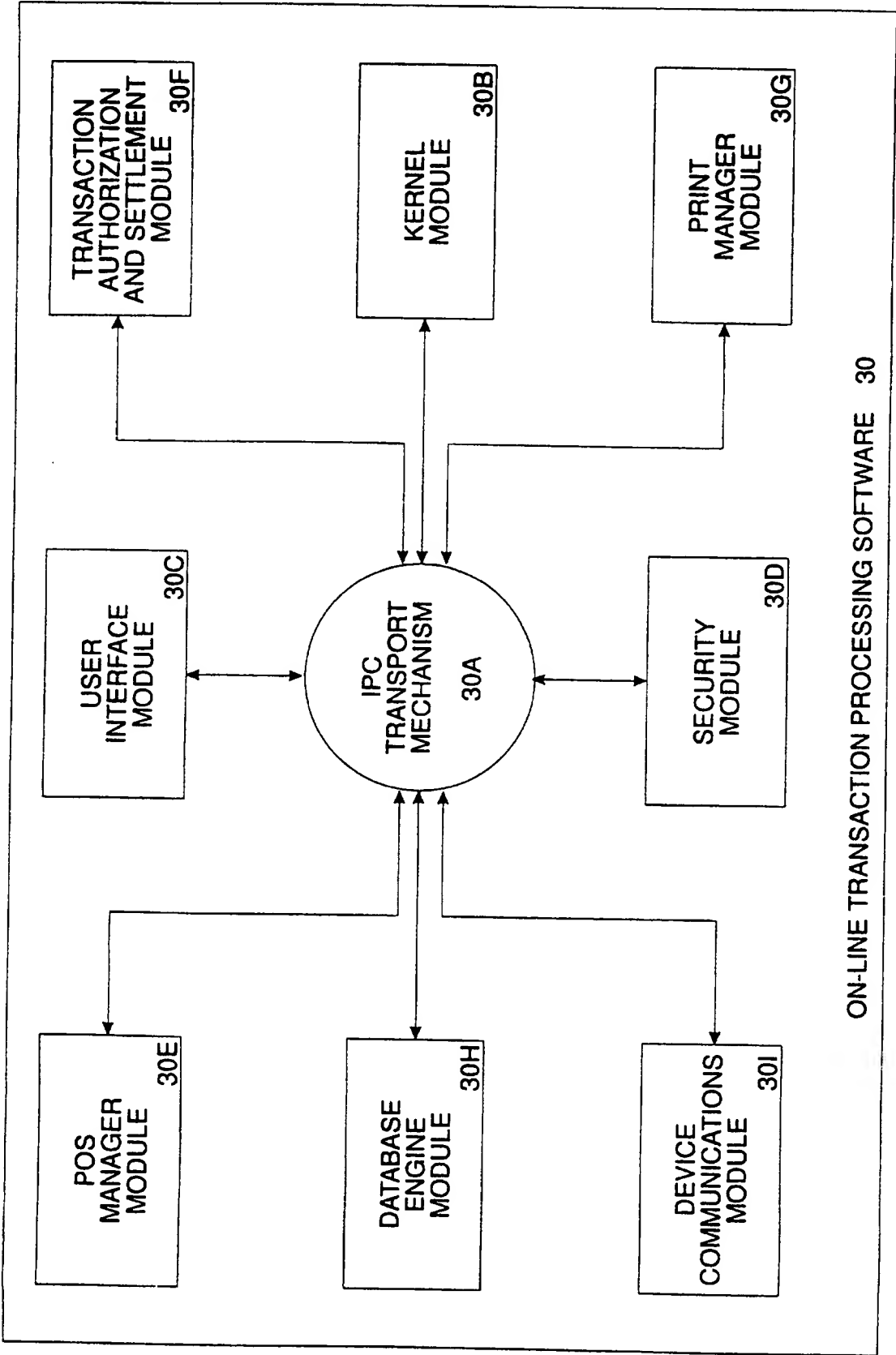


FIG. 3

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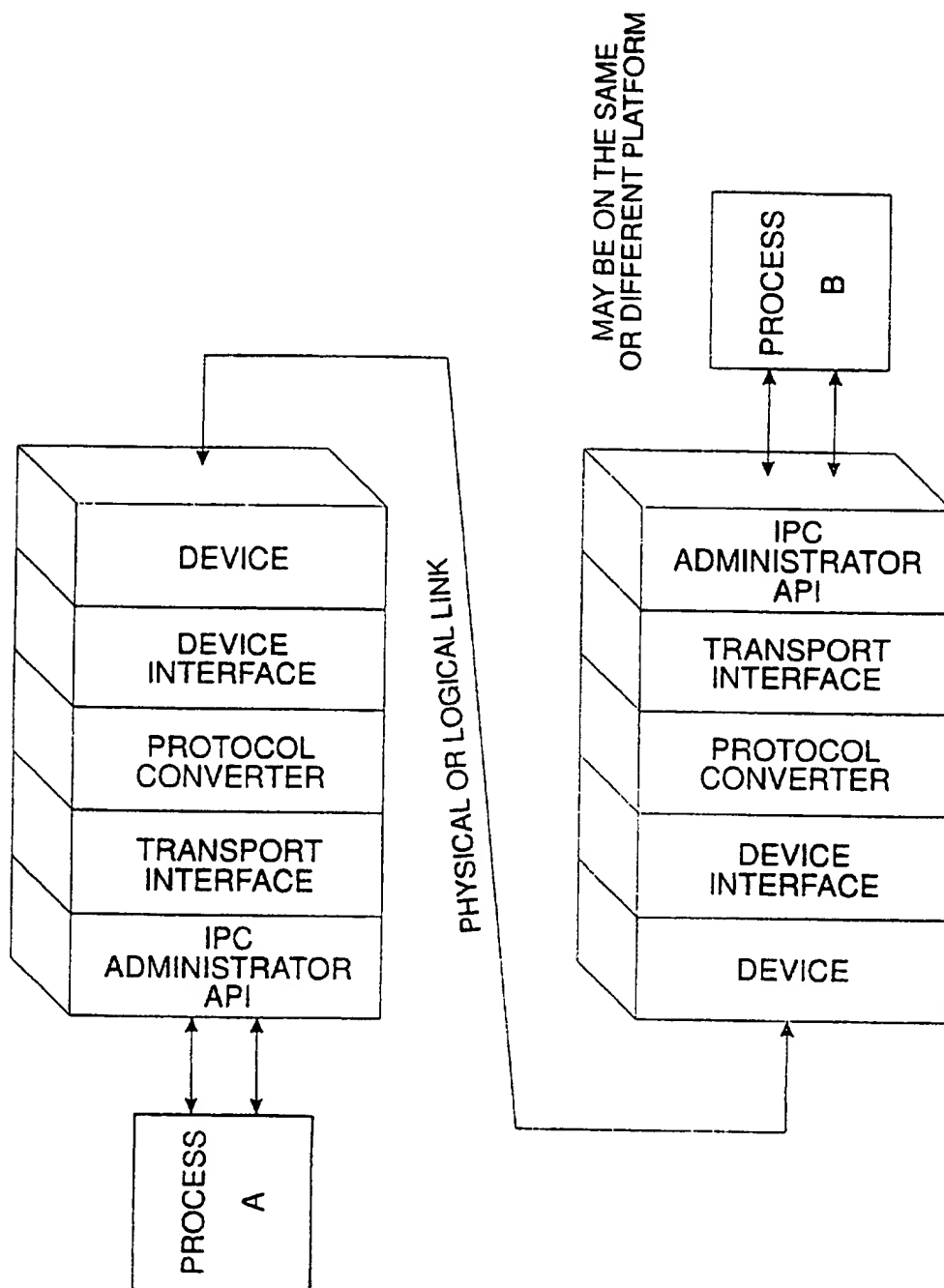


FIG. 4

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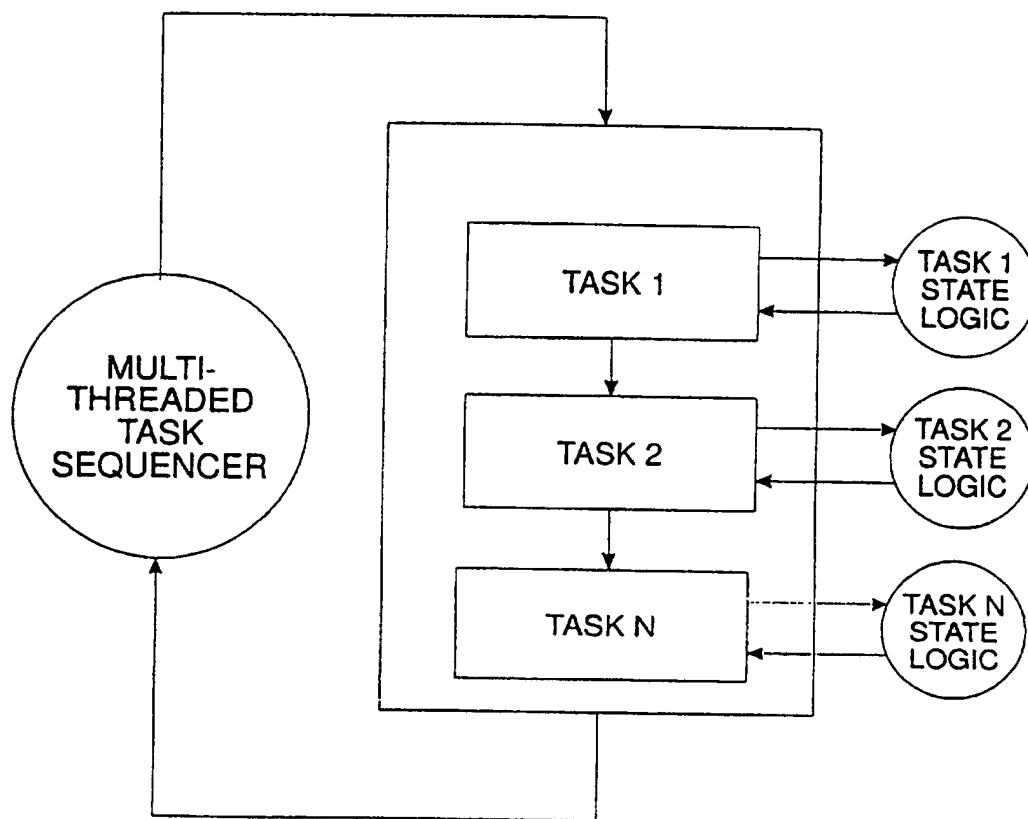


FIG. 5

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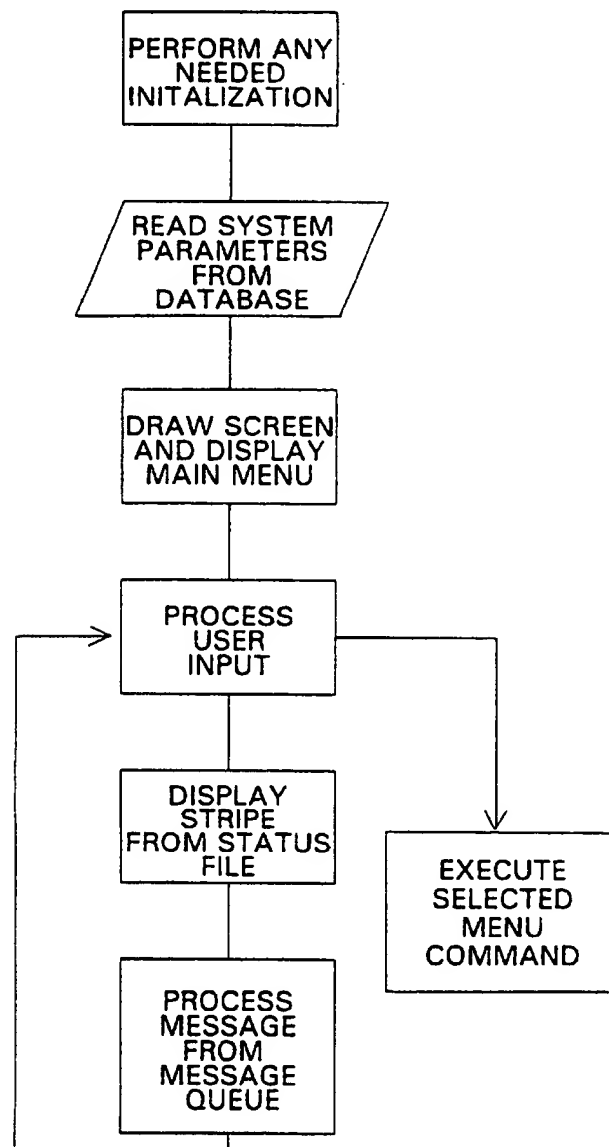


FIG. 6

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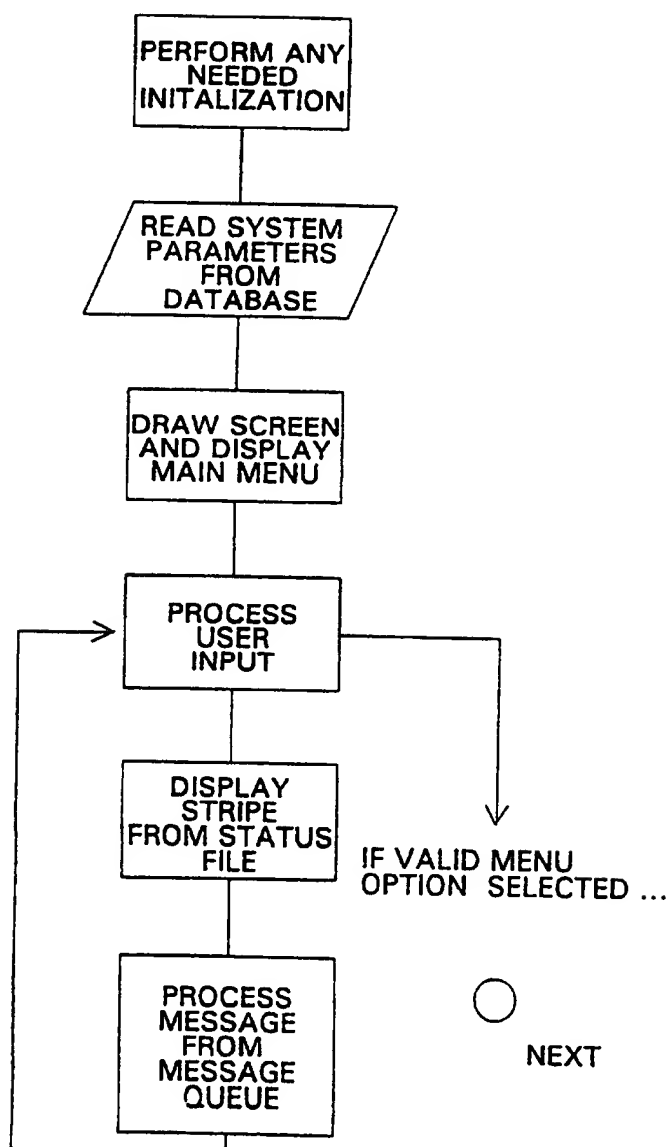


FIG. 7

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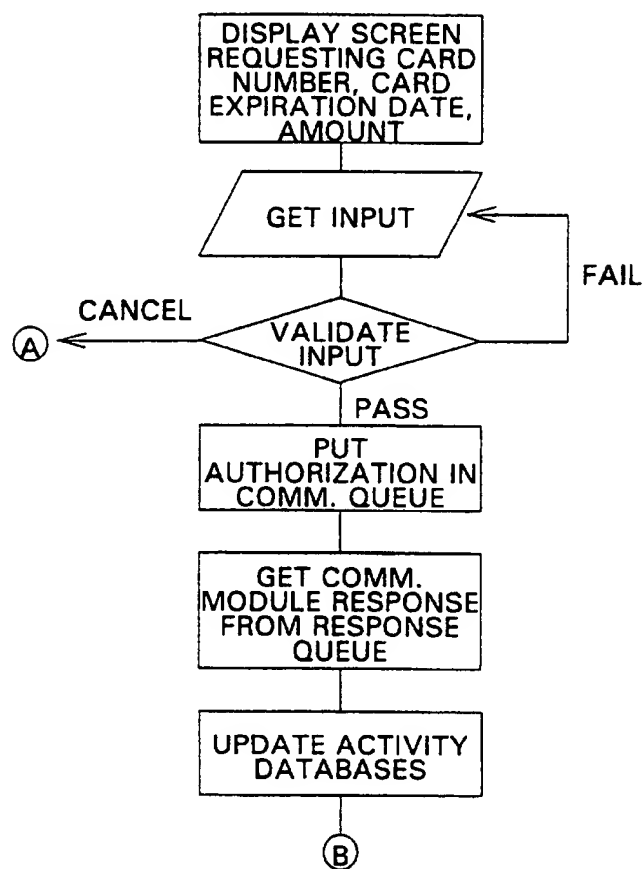


FIG. 8

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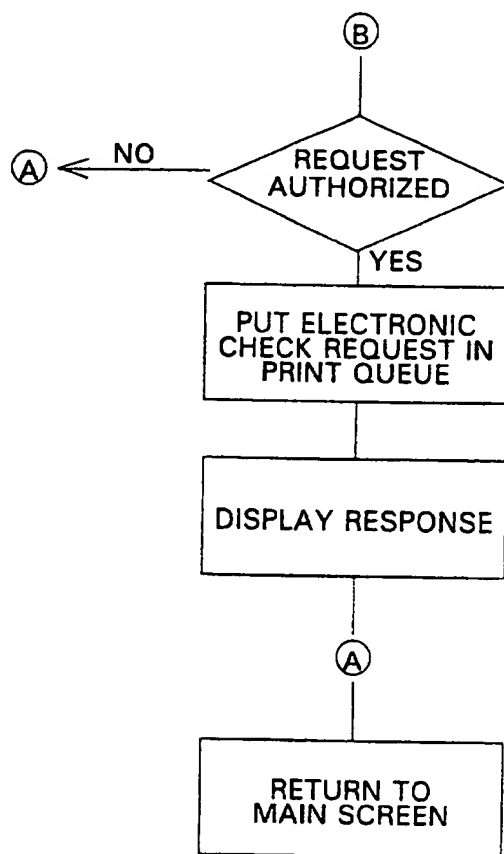


FIG. 9

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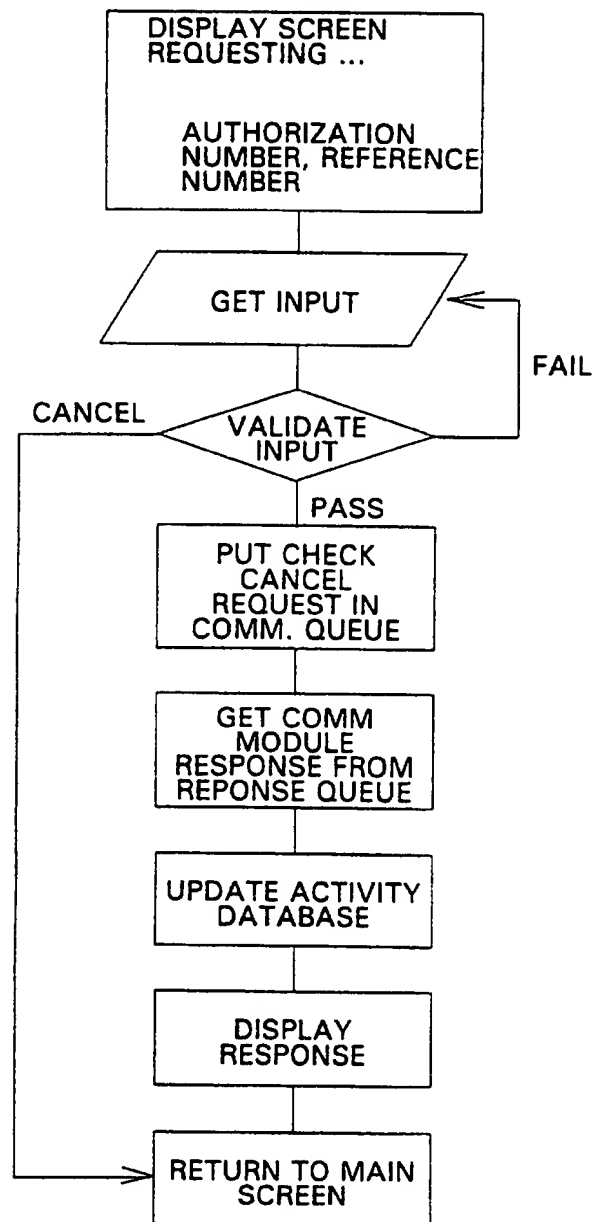


FIG. 10

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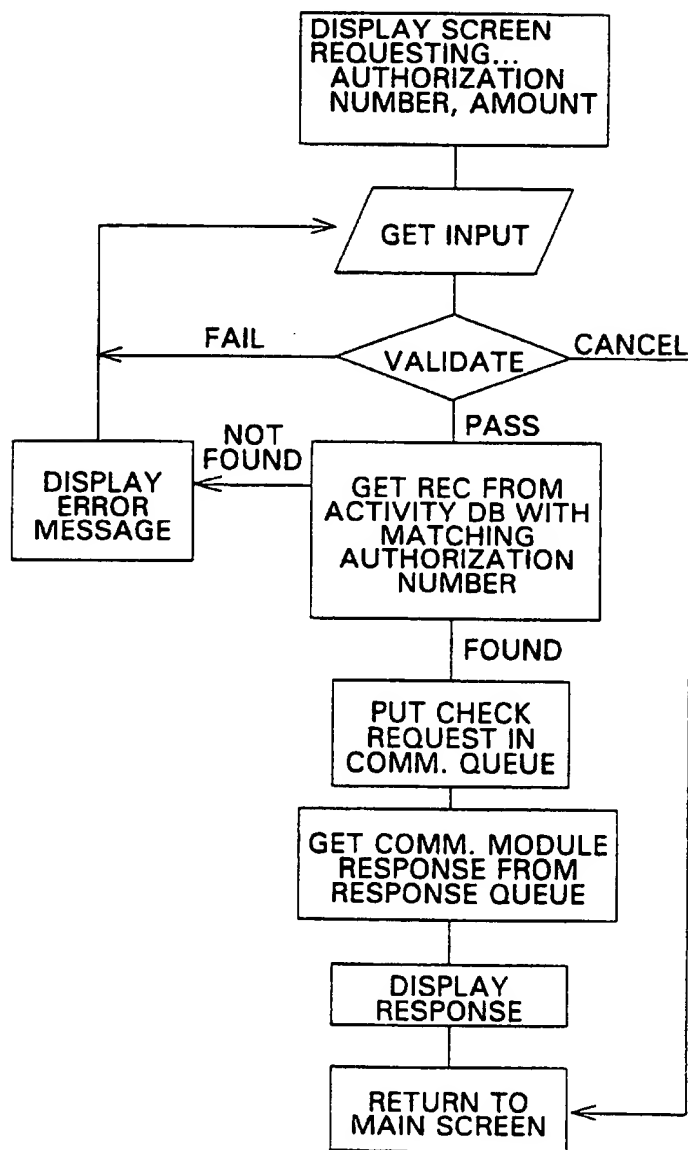


FIG. 11

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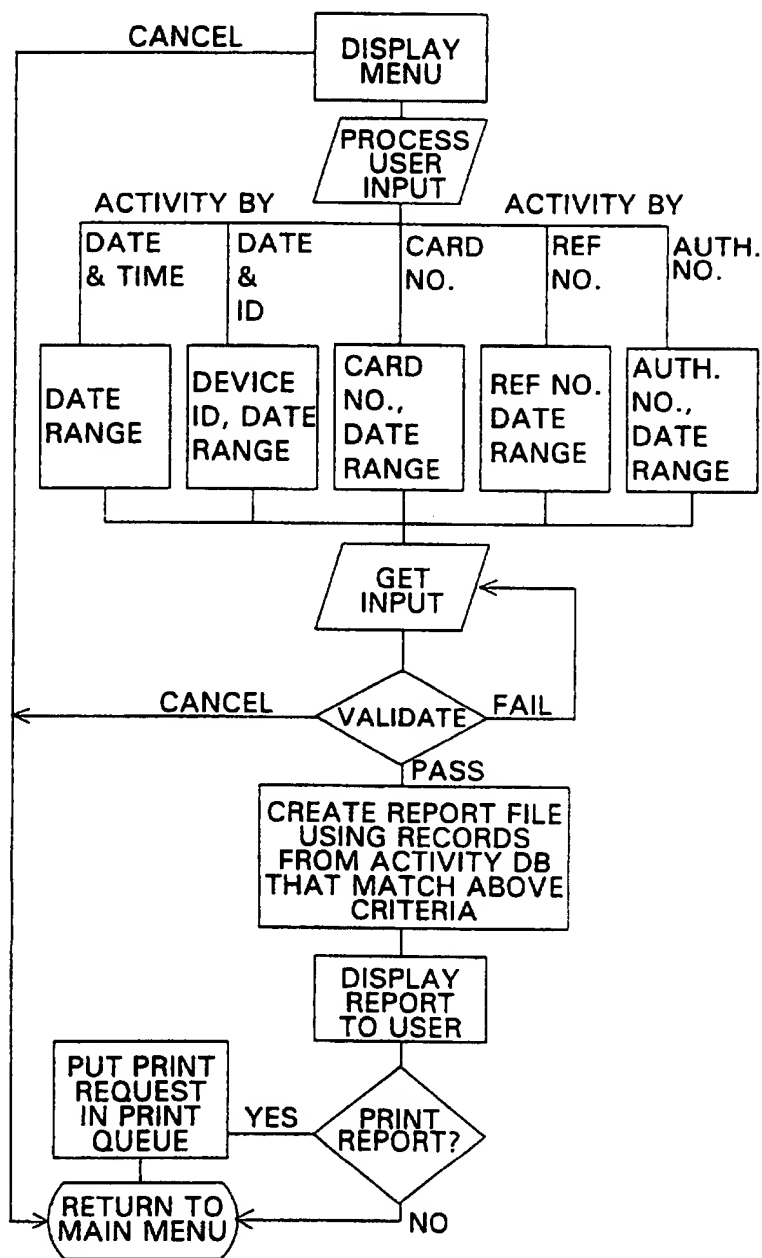


FIG. 12

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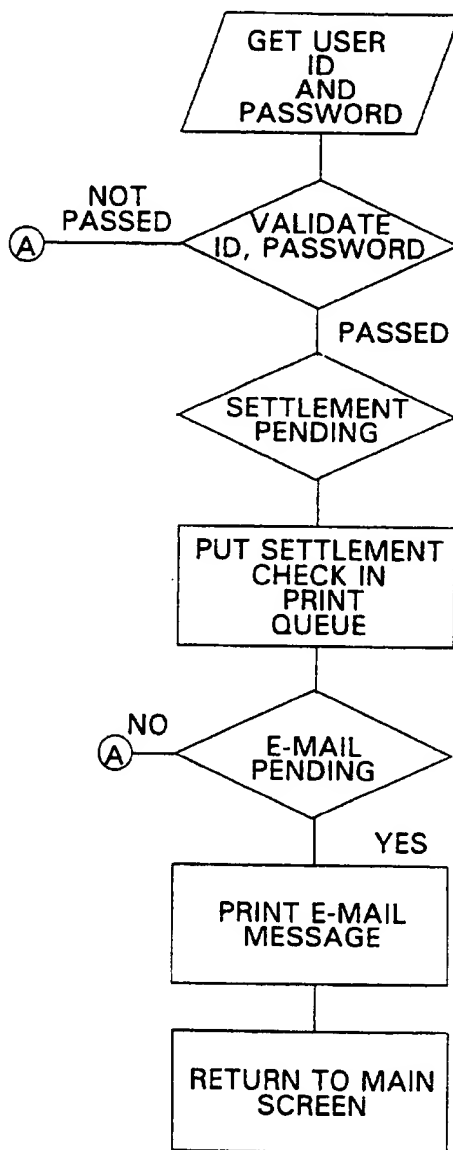


FIG. 13

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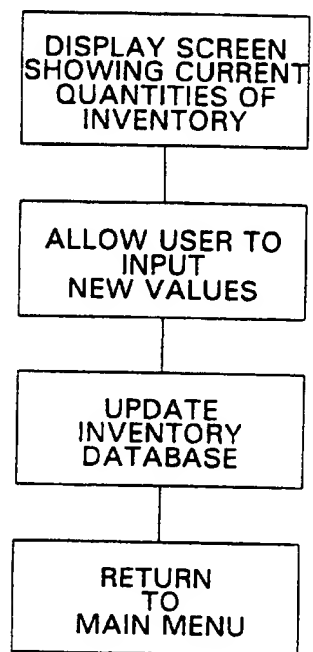


FIG. 14

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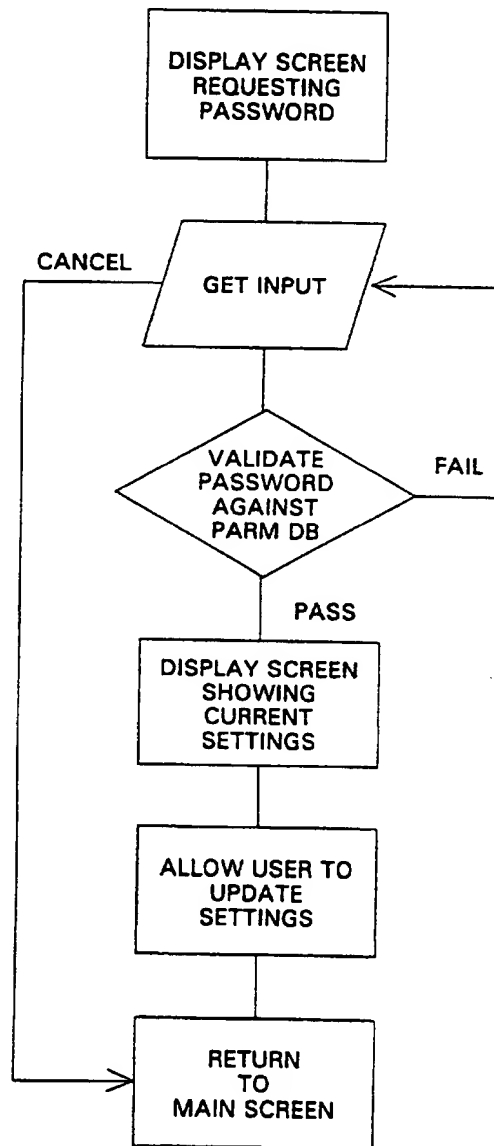


FIG. 15

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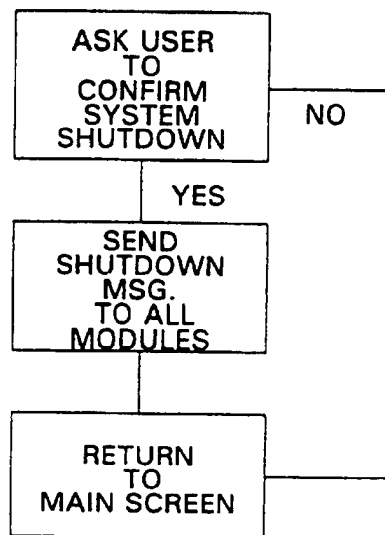


FIG. 16

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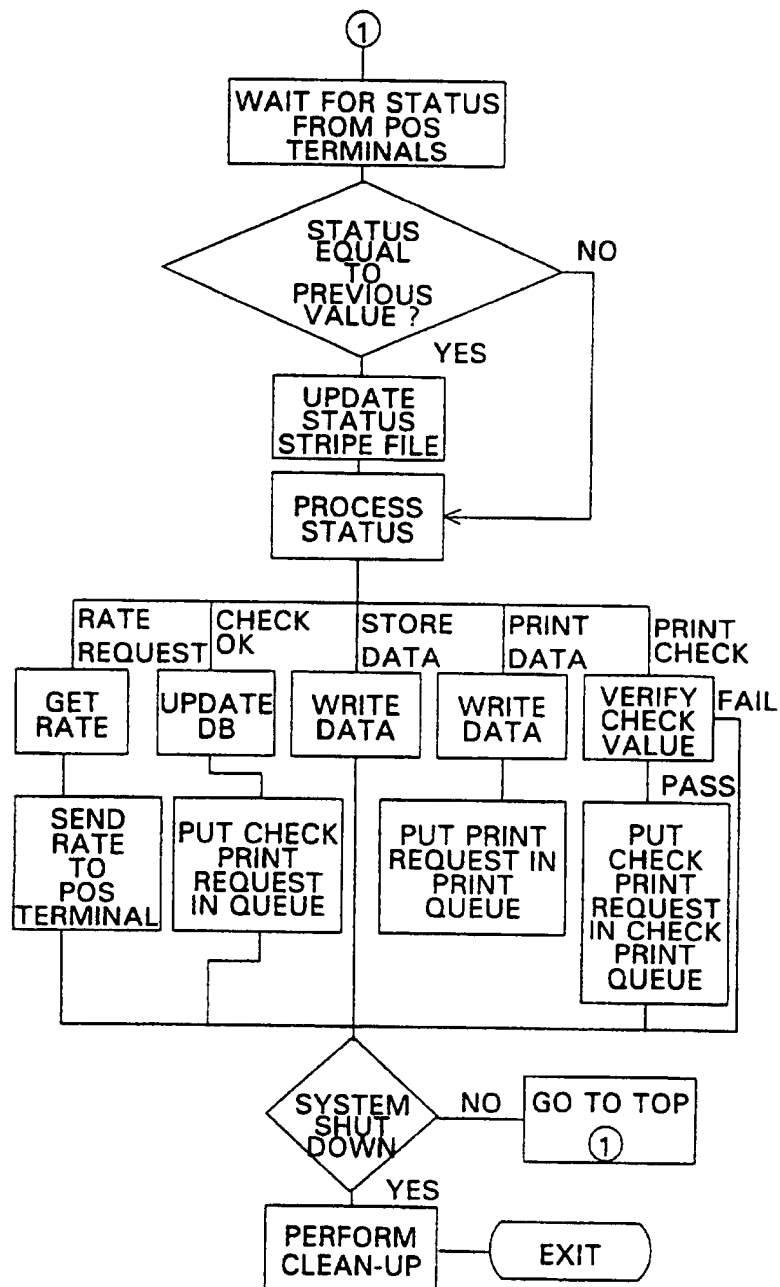


FIG. 17

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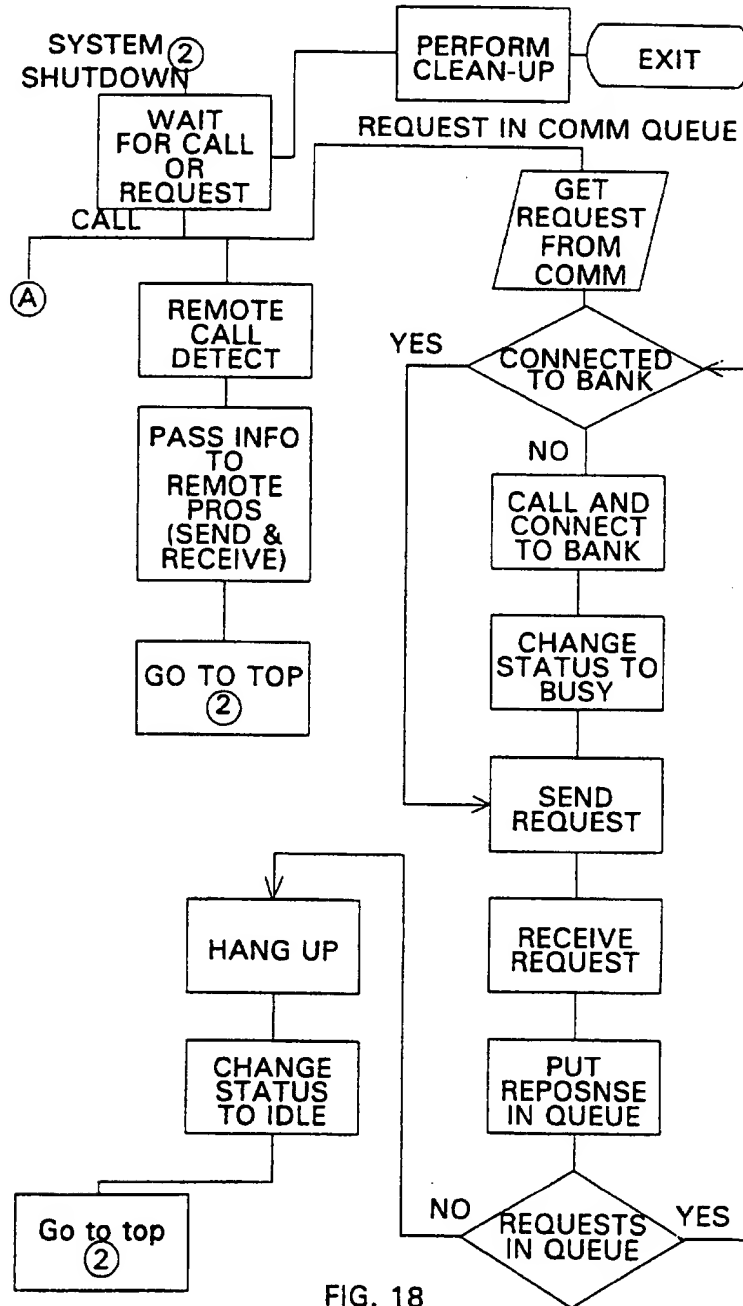


FIG. 18

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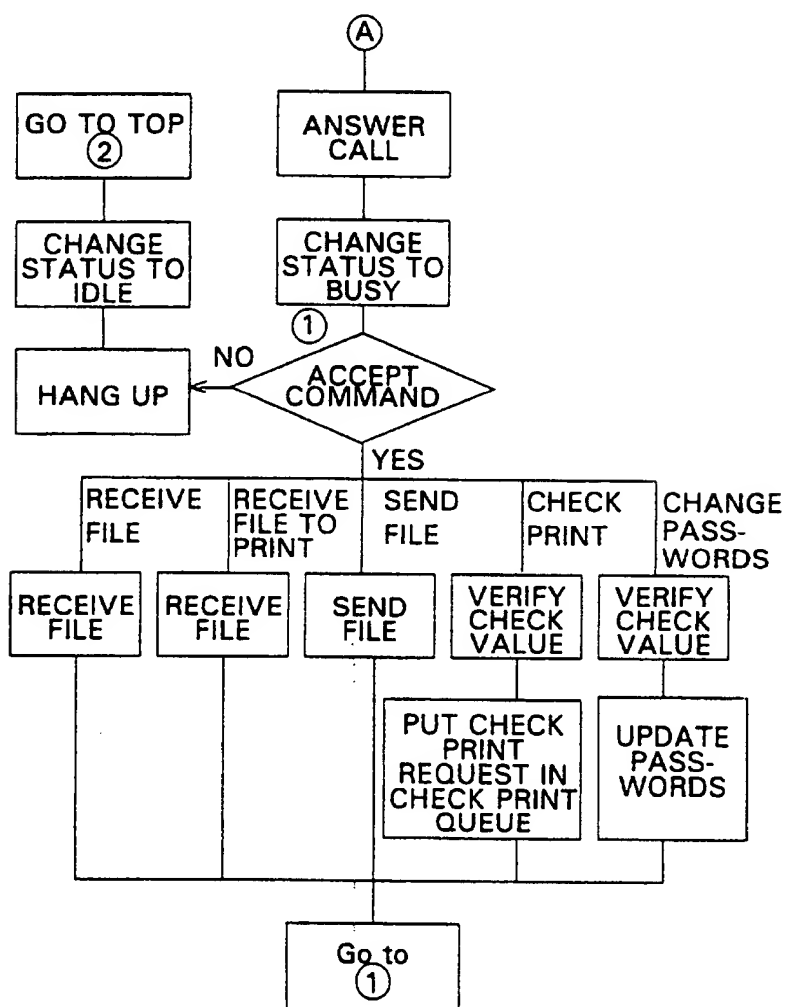


FIG. 19

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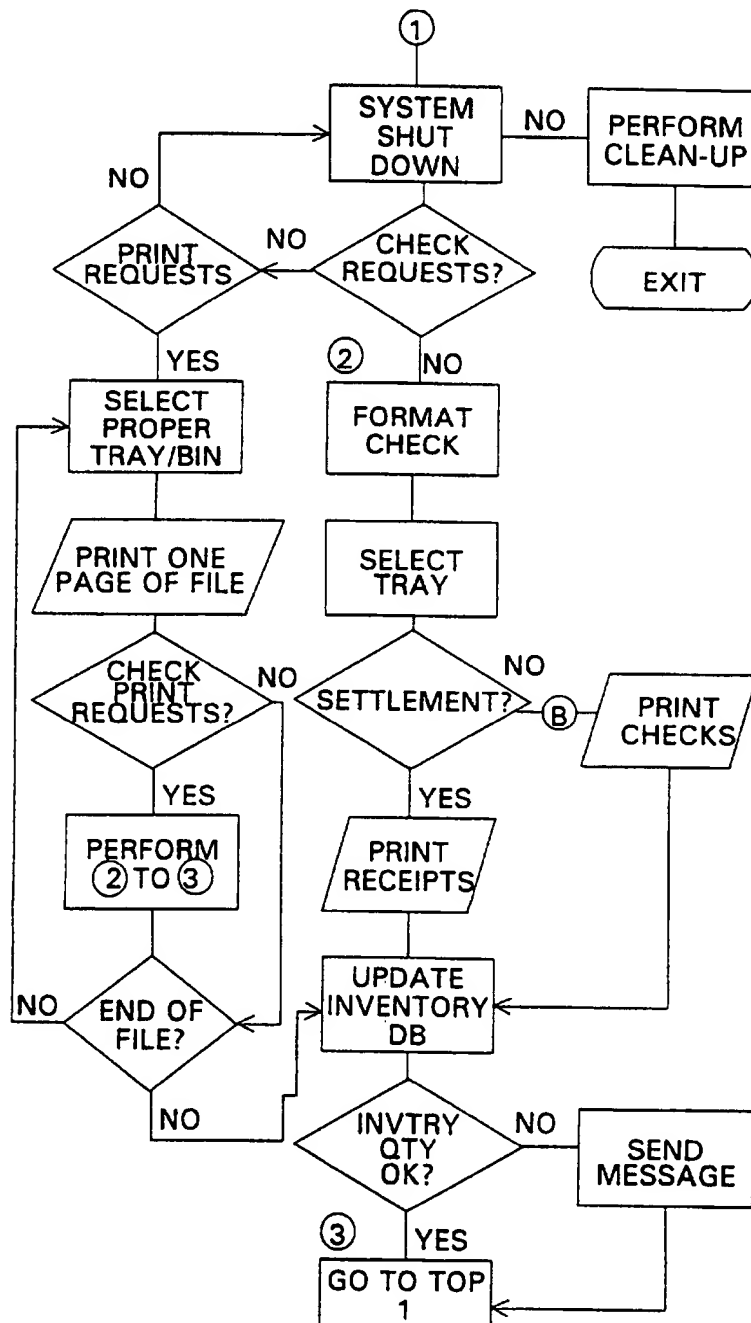


FIG. 20

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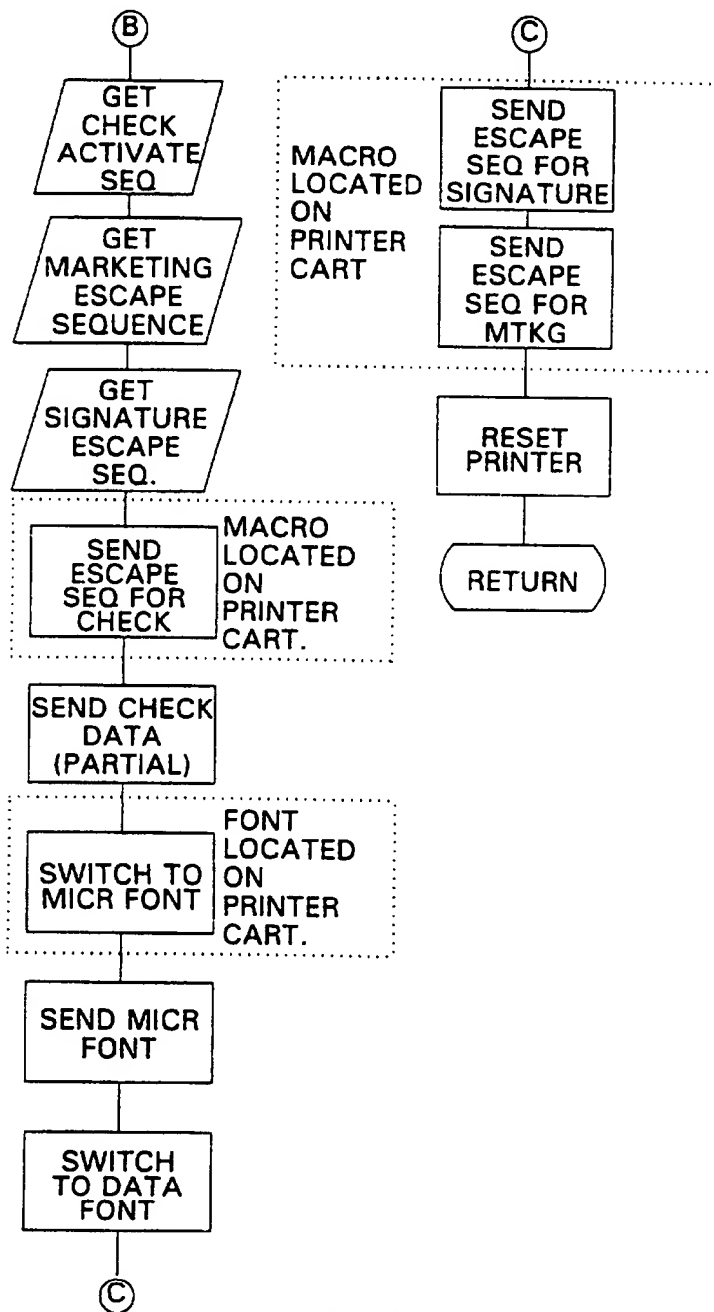


FIG. 21

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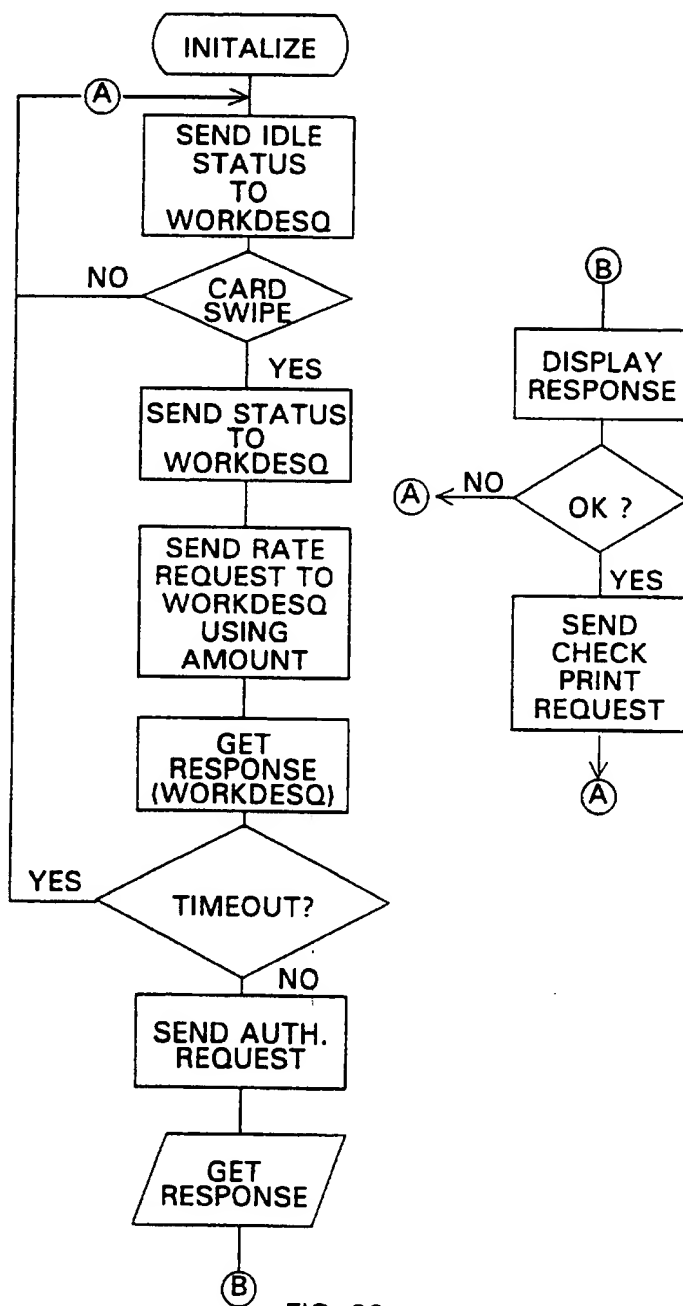


FIG. 22

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US95/13166

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : G07F 19/00, 7/00; G06F 17/60 19/00

US CL : 235/379,380;364/408

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 235/379,380;364/408,401,406

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

APS, DIALOG, JAPIO

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X,E	US,A, 5,457,305 (AKEL et al.) 10 October 1995, all	1-20
A	US,A, 5,408,417 (WILDER) 18 April 1995, col. 2 line 43 to col. 3 line 21.	1-20
A,E	US,A, 5,477,037 (BERGER) 19 December 1995, col. 1 lines 25-67.	1-20
Y	US,A, 5,220,157 (MARTIN ET AL.) 15 JUNE 1993, col. 1 lines 22-34, col. 2 lines 25-33.	1-20
Y	American Banker, 27 October 1983, Robert M. Garson, "FundsNet Settles Antitrust Suit", Pg. 3.	1-9

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

	Special categories of cited documents:		
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be part of particular relevance	"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E"	earlier document published on or after the international filing date	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	"A"	document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

07 MARCH 1996

Date of mailing of the international search report

27 MAR 1996

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